

## Dante's Sixth Centenary

### *The Holy Father's Encyclical*

**T**O Our beloved sons the professors and students of all the Catholic institutions for instruction in literature and higher culture on the sixth centenary of the death of Dante Alighieri.

BENEDICT XV, POPE.

Beloved sons, Health and the Apostolic Benediction. Amongst the many famous geniuses who are glories of the Catholic Faith, and who, besides leaving in other fields of knowledge, have left especially in literature and art immortal fruit of their ability, deserving greatly of religion and civilization, a special position has been attained by Dante Alighieri, the sixth centenary of whose death will soon be celebrated. But perhaps his singular greatness has never been set forth in such strong light as today, when not only is Italy, which is justly proud of having been his birthplace, exerting herself to honor his memory, but all civilized nations through fitting committees of the learned are preparing to celebrate his memory in order that this exalted figure, the pride and ornament of humanity, may be honored by the whole world. Now, in this wonderful chorus of all good men it is fitting that Our voice should not be wanting but that We should in a certain sense take the lead inasmuch as, first and foremost, the Church has a parental right to call Alighieri her own. As, then, at the beginning of Our Pontificate, in a letter addressed to the Archbishop of Ravenna, We promoted the restoration of the church where the ashes of the poet repose, so now, at the beginning of the centennial festivities, it has seemed right to address you all, beloved sons, who cultivate letters under the maternal vigilance of the Church, in order to show more clearly the intimate union of Dante with this Chair of Peter and how the praise bestowed on such an exalted name necessarily redounds in no small measure to the honor of the Catholic Church.

## A CATHOLIC CELEBRATION

And, first of all, since the divine poet during his entire life professed the Catholic religion in an exemplary manner, it can be regarded as in harmony with his wishes that this solemn commemoration should take place, as it will, under the auspices of religion and that, if it is completed at St. Francis', Ravenna, its beginning is at Florence, in his beautiful Church of St. John, to which his thoughts were turned with intense longing in the later years of his life when he was an exile, desiring to be crowned there as a poet at his baptismal font. Born in an age which received as an inheritance from the past the splendid fruits of doctrine and philosophical and theological speculation, and transmitted them to future ages with the stamp of the rigorous Scholastic method, Dante amidst the various currents of thought which were then diffused amongst the learned became a disciple of that prince of the schools, whose teaching was so clear owing to the angelic character of his intellect, St. Thomas Aquinas, and from him derived almost all his philosophical and theological science; though he did not neglect any branch of human knowledge and drank largely at the fountains of the Holy Scripture and the Fathers. Having thus become acquainted with almost all the knowledge that could be attained in his day and having been specially nourished with Christian wisdom, when he prepared to write it was from the sphere of religion that he undertook to treat a subject which was immense and of the greatest importance. Wherefore if the wonderful vastness and force of his genius is to be admired, we must also recognize the powerful impulse of inspiration which he derived from Divine Faith and which enabled him to embellish his immortal poem with the multi-form lights of revealed truths no less than with all the splendor of art. In fact, his "*Commedia*," which has deservedly received the title of "*Divine*," even in the different symbolical stories and in the records of the life of men on earth aims at nothing else than to glorify the justice and providence of God, who governs the world in time and in eternity and punishes or rewards the actions of individuals and of human society.

Therefore, in accordance with Divine Revelation shine forth in this poem the majesty of the one Triune God, the Redemption of the human race effected by the Word of God made Man, the great mercy and goodness of Mary, Virgin and Mother, Queen of Heaven, and finally the heavenly happiness of the Saints, the Angels and men, to which indeed in the opposite region, in hell, are set the punishments ordained for the guilty; between both being fixed the seat of souls destined, after expiration, to heavenly bliss. It is truly marvelous how wisely these and other Catholic dogmas are interwoven in the whole of the work. And, if the progress of astronomical science showed that there was no basis for this conception of the world and that the spheres supposed by the ancients do not exist, seeing that the nature, number, and course of the stars and the planets are altogether different from what they thought them to be, the fundamental principle was not the less true that the universe, whatever be the order that sustains it in its parts, is governed by the will—by which it was established—of Almighty God, who moves and rules all things and whose glory shines more in one part and less in another, and that this earth which we inhabit, although it be not the center of the universe, as was believed at one time, was the abode of our first parents and therefore the witness of their unhappy fall and of man's redemption by the death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

#### A TREASURY OF RELIGIOUS TRUTHS.

Wherefore the divine poet explained the triple life of the souls that he had arranged in his mind, so that in declaring before the last judgment the damnation of the wicked, the purgation of the good spirits, and the eternal happiness of the blessed, he appears to seek clear light in his close knowledge of the Faith.

Now, amongst the truths prominently brought out by Alighieri in his threefold poem, and also in his other works, we believe that these especially may prove instructive to people of the present time. That Christians owe supreme reverence to the Holy Scriptures and ought to receive with perfect docility what they contain he loudly proclaims when he says that though there are many

copyists of the Divine Word, one alone is Dictator: God who has deigned to indicate to us His will through the pens of many (Mon. iii, 4), a splendid expression of a great truth. So also, when he states that the Old and the New Testament, which are prescribed for eternity, as the Prophet says, contain spiritual teachings which transcend human reason, imparted by the Holy Spirit, who, through the Prophets and the sacred writers, through Jesus Christ, co-eternal Son of God, and His disciples, revealed the supernatural truth necessary for us (Mon. iii, 3, 16). Most correctly, therefore, does he say concerning the future life, "We have the certainty of it in the most truthful doctrine of Christ, which is the way, the truth and the light; the way, because through it, without obstruction we proceed to the happiness of immortality; the truth, because it is free from all error; the light, because it illumines us in the darkness of worldly ignorance (Conv. ii, 9). Nor does he show less reverence for those venerable chief Councils at which none of the Faithful doubts that Christ was present; and in great esteem with him were also the writings of the Doctors, St. Augustine and the others, as to whom he says that anyone who doubts that they were aided by the Holy Spirit has never seen their fruits, or, if he has seen them, has never tasted them (Mon. iii, 3).

#### DANTE AND THE CHURCH'S AUTHORITY

Astonishing is the high opinion Alighieri held of the authority of the Catholic Church and the power of the Roman Pontiff as that on which is based every law and institution of the Church itself. Wherefore this energetic admonition to Christians: "You have the Old and the New Testament and the Pastor of the Church who guides you: this is sufficient for your salvation." He felt the evils from which the Church suffered as if they were his own, and, deploring and execrating every rebellion against the supreme head, he thus wrote to the Italian Cardinals during the stay of the Popes at Avignon:

We, then, who confess the same Father and Son, the same God and Man, and the same Mother and Virgin; we, for whom and for whose salvation was said to him who out of love was interrogated three times: "Peter, feed the sheep of My holy fold"; we, of Rome (of that Rome for which, after the pomp

of so many triumphs, Christ in word and work confirmed the empire of the world, and which Peter, and Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, consecrated as the Apostolic See with their own blood), are constrained with Jeremiah, lamenting not for the future, but for the present, to grieve for as widowed and deserted; we are oppressed by sorrow at seeing her thus suffering and also at seeing the lamentable plague of heresy (Epist. viii).

For him the Roman Church is the pious mother or Spouse of the Crucified; and to Peter, infallible judge of revealed truth, is due perfect submission in matters of faith and morals. Hence though it was his opinion that the dignity of the Emperor proceeded immediately from God, still he asserts that this truth is not to be so strictly understood that the Roman prince is subject in nothing to the Roman Pontiff; since this mortal happiness is in some manner ordained for immortal happiness (Mon. iii, 16). In truth an excellent and wise principle, which, if it were observed, as it should be today, would bring to States the rich fruit of civil prosperity.

But it will be said that he attacked the Sovereign Pontiffs of his time so bitterly and contumeliously. Yes, but these were Popes who disagreed with them in politics and who, he believed, belonged to the party that had banished him from his country. But we must extend pardon to a man so tossed about by fortune's terrible waves, if with a mind full of irritation he sometimes bursts into invectives which seem without measure; all the more because, to inflame his anger, there were not wanting evil reports, propagated, as is customary, by political adversaries, always inclined to put a bad interpretation on everything. Moreover, such is the weakness of mortals that even religious hearts must become stained with the grime of the world's dust; and who will deny that there were at that time amongst the clergy things to be reproved at which a soul so devoted to the Church as that of Dante must have been quite disgusted, and we know that men distinguished for eminent sanctity then emphatically reproved them. But however vehemently he rightly or rashly attacked ecclesiastical persons, not a whit less, however, was the respect which he felt due to the Church and the reverence for the supreme keys; wherefore in politics he knew how to defend his own opinion with "that homage which a pious son should employ towards his

own father—pious towards his mother, pious towards Christ, pious towards the Church, pious towards the Pastor, pious towards all who profess the Christian religion for the protection of truth." (Mon. iii, 3).

#### AN ARMORY OF CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

Accordingly, having based the whole structure of his poem on such solid religious principles, it is not surprising that it should be found a treasure of Catholic doctrine, that, not only the juice of Christian philosophy and theology but also a compendium of the Divine laws which should regulate the order and administration of States; for Alighieri was not the man to maintain that, in order to enlarge one's country or to gratify rulers, justice and the laws of God could be neglected by the State, in the observance of which he well knew the welfare of the State chiefly depended.

Wonderful, then, is the intellectual enjoyment which the study of this great poet affords; and not less is the profit which the studious derive from him, perfecting their artistic taste and inflaming their zeal for virtue; only let those who approach him be free from prejudices and open to the influence of truth. It may also be said that, whilst the number of great Catholic poets who combine the useful with the delectable are not few, this is singular in Dante that, fascinating the reader with the marvelous variety of his images, the beauty of the colors, and the grandeur of the words and sentences, he entices him to the love of Christian wisdom; and let no one forget that he openly confessed that he had composed his poem to provide "vital nourishment" for all. As a matter of fact we know that some, even recently, far from Christ, but not opposed to Him, studying the "*Divina Commedia*" with love, by Divine grace first commenced to admire the truth of the Catholic Faith and finished by casting themselves enthusiastically into the arms of the Church.

What we have said so far suffices to prove how opportune it is that on the occasion of this world-centenary each one should intensify his zeal for the preservation of the Faith, which revealed itself so luminously, if ever in others, certainly in Alighieri as a promoter of culture and art, since in him not only is the loftiness of his genius

admired, but also the grandeur of the theme that our holy religion offered him as a subject for song. If the acumen of his great genius brought him near, after long meditation and study, to the classical masterpieces of the ancients, it was still more vigorously tempered, as We have already said, by the writings of the Doctors and Fathers, which gave him a wing to lift himself in the horizon far above those who are enclosed in the brief ambit of nature. Wherefore, although separated from us by an interval of centuries, he still betrays the freshness of a poet of our age; and certainly he is much more modern than certain recent poets, exhumers of that paganism which was banished forever by Christ triumphant on the Cross. Alighieri breathes the same piety as we do, the same sentiments, the same faith, and is clothed in the same garment, come to us from Heaven, "the truth by which we are lifted so high."

#### THE POET OF CHRISTIAN IDEALS

This is his chief praise, to be a Christian poet: that is to say, to have sung in Divine accents those Christian ideals which he passionately admired in all the vigor of their beauty, being profoundly attached to them and living in them. And those who venture to deny such merit to Dante and reduce all the religious substructure of the "*Divina Commedia*" to a vague ideology that has no foundation of truth, overlook in Dante what is characteristic and the foundation of all his other merits.

If, then, Dante owed such a large share of his fame and grandeur to the Catholic Faith, this single example, not to mention others, is enough to prove how false it is to say that the offering of the homage of the mind and heart to God clips the wings of genius, whilst, on the contrary, genius is spurred and exalted by it; and how wretchedly they provide for the progress of culture and civilization who wish to banish every idea of religion from public instruction. Very deplorable in truth is the system adopted today of educating studious youth in such a way as if God did not exist and without the slightest allusion to the supernatural, for if in some places the "sacred poem" is not kept out of the school and is even numbered amongst the books that ought to be most earnestly studied,

it cannot for the most part supply the young with that "vital nourishment" which it is destined to produce inasmuch as, owing to disciplinary directions, it is not, as it should be, fittingly disposed with regard to the truths of the Faith. God grant that this celebration may have the result that wherever literary studies are cultivated Dante may be held in due honor and may become himself the teacher of Christian doctrine, he who professed that his poem had no other object than to lift up mortals from the state of misery, that is, from sin and to lead them to the state of happiness, that is, of Divine grace. And you, beloved sons, who are called to follow the paths of literature under the guidance of the Church, love and hold dear the poet whom We do not hesitate to proclaim the most eloquent singer of Christian wisdom. The more you study him, the higher will be your culture, irradiated by the splendors of truth, and the stronger and more spontaneous will be your homage to the Catholic Faith.

As a pledge of heavenly favors, and in testimony of Our paternal benevolence, We heartily grant to you all, beloved sons, the Apostolic Benediction.

BENEDICT XV, POPE.

## Spain's Divine Quixotism

MIGUEL DE UNAMUNO

This article, translated by A. Philip McMahon, Ph. D., from the Spanish of Miguel de Unamuno, consists of selected portions of the concluding chapter of his book, "*El Sentimiento Trágico de la Vida*." This book, published before the Great War, deals in a somewhat diffuse but stimulating way with the theme of immortality. The author was Rector of the University of Salamanca, in touch with the intellectual currents of modern Europe, and strikingly presents the reactions of an earnest Catholic thinker. The article is reprinted with the courteous leave of the *American Church Monthly*.

**A** VERY few years after our friend Don Quixote went riding about Spain, Jacob Boehme tells us that he is not writing a story which others might have related to him, but that he himself must needs be in the battle, fighting hard and often overcome, as all men are; and even though he has to make of himself a spectacle for the world and the devil, as regards the future life, he still keeps faith in God, in whom he will risk his life, and not

resist the Holy Spirit. Amen. I, no more than this Quixote of German thought, desire to resist the Spirit.

Therefore I launch forth my voice, which will cry in the wilderness, and I launch it forth from the University of Salamanca, which arrogantly calls itself *Omnium scientiarum princeps*, which Carlyle called a stronghold of ignorance, and which a French writer a short time ago called a phantom university. I do so from Spain, "the land where dreams become realities, the defender of Europe, the home of the ideal of chivalry," as Mr. Archer M. Huntington, poet, recently said to me, from this Spain, head of the Counter-Reformation in the sixteenth century.

In my fourth chapter I spoke of the essence of Catholicism. To volatilize this essence, that is, to de-Catholicize Europe, the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Revolution have worked together, substituting for that ideal of an eternal life beyond the world, another ideal of progress, of reason, of science.

In the second half of the past nineteenth century, an unphilosophical and technological epoch, dominated by myopic specialism and by historical materialism, this ideal was translated by means of a vulgarizing, pseudo-scientific movement to popularize science in cheap, sectarian books. The purpose was thus to popularize science, as if science should descend to the level of the mob and serve its passions, when the fact is that the people should rise to its level and by means of it gain still loftier heights, led on by new and profound longings.

This thought led Brunetière to proclaim the bankruptcy of science, and this science, or whatever it was, actually did go into bankruptcy. Then, since it did not satisfy, happiness was sought everywhere, without finding it, in riches, in knowledge, in power, in pleasure, in resignation, in a good moral conscience, or in civilization. And so came pessimism.

#### THE MODERN SCIENTIFIC INQUISITION

Nor did the cult of progress bring satisfaction. Progress—for what? Man was not satisfied with what was rational, the *Kulturkampf* was not enough; he wished to give life a final purpose. The famous *maladie du siècle*, which is announced in Rousseau and which is pointed out more

clearly than anywhere else in the *Obermann* of Sénancour, was nothing less than the loss of faith in the immortality of the soul, in the human purpose of the universe. . . .

When Galileo sent his writing on the mobility of the earth to the Duke of Tuscany, he told him that one ought to obey and believe in what is determined by one's superiors, and he himself considered his writing "as a piece of poetry or indeed a dream, and as such let your Highness accept it." He called it a "chimera" and a "mathematical caprice." I also in what I am writing, because I am afraid—why not confess it—of the Inquisition, of the modern scientific Inquisition, offer as a piece of poetry, as a dream, a chimera or mystical caprice, what springs up within me. I say with Galileo: "*Eppur si muove.*" But is that fear the only cause? No, there is yet another even more tragic Inquisition, and it is the one which every modern, educated European—such as I am whether I wish it or not—carries within himself. There is another more terrible ridicule, and that is the ridicule before myself and by myself. My reason is making sport of my faith and despising it.

Here is where I must take refuge with our friend Don Quixote to learn how to face this ridicule and conquer it, a ridicule which he perhaps did not know. Yes, why should my reason not smile at these pseudo-scientific constructions, mystical pretenses, efforts of a dilettante, where anything may be found except scientific study, objectivity, and method? And . . . "*Eppur si muove.*"

Indeed, "*Eppur si muove.*" And I come back to dilettantism, what a philosopher might call demi-mondaine philosophy, as against pedantic specialization, and the philosophy of professional philosophers. Still, better things commonly come from the unprofessional, and there is nothing more exhausted than the philosophy of philosophers, and the theology of theologians.

What if they do talk to us about European civilization? The civilization of Thibet is parallel to ours, and under it men have lived and do live who disappear just as we do. Floating over all the civilizations abides Ecclesiastes, and that verse: "And how does the wise man die even as the fool." Among the common people in this country there is an admirable reply to the ordinary question, "How are you?" or, "How do you do?" which is, "Alive." And that

is the fact, we are alive, we live as much as the rest. And what more can you ask? . . .

Not long ago somebody was shocked because I replied to those who found fault with us Saniards on account of our incapacity for science, after pointing out that the electric light shines here, and the locomotive runs as well here as where it was invented, and we use logarithms just as they do in the country where they were first thought of, by saying, "Let them go ahead and invent!" I do not renounce the paradox now . . . It is no matter if we have no scientific spirit. It matters not if we lack any spirit at all. And how do we know whether or not the spirit we have is compatible with the scientific? But when I said "Let them go ahead and invent," I did not mean that we should be content with a passive role. For them, the science by which we benefit; for us, what is ours. It is not enough to defend oneself, one should attack.

#### REASON OUR WEAPON

Yet attack with skill and caution. Reason should be our weapon, as it is even the madman's . . . Indeed, it was by making himself ridiculous that Don Quixote gained his immortality. And there are so many ways of making oneself ridiculous! Cournot said: "One should not speak to princes nor to peoples of their possibilities of death; princes punish such temerity with disgrace; the public avenges itself with ridicule." So it is, and therefore they say that one should live with the times. As Tacitus writes: "*Corrumperet et corrumpi saeculum vocatur.*"

But we are told that civilization is composed of ideas and of ideas only and that man is but its instrument. Man is made for the idea and not the idea for man; the body is made for the shadow. The end of man is to make science, to catalogue the universe and return it to God in good order. Man is not apparently even an idea. And finally mankind will succumb at the foot of the libraries—whole forests having been destroyed to make the paper which they hoard—museums, machinery, factories, laboratories . . . to bequeath them . . . to whom? For God will not accept them.

The individual is the real purpose of the universe. And that the individual is the purpose of the universe we Span-

iards feel very well. . . . Perhaps this very individualism, itself introspective, is what has prevented strictly philosophical, or rather metaphysical systems from arising here.

We may seek the hero of our thought in no philosopher who lived in flesh and blood, but in a being of fiction and of action, more real than all the philosophers; he is Don Quixote. There is doubtless a philosophic Quixotism, but there is also a Quixotic philosophy. What else is at bottom the philosophy of the explorers, of the counter-reformers, of Loyola, and above all, the thought, abstract but sensed, of our mystics? What else was the mysticism of St. John of the Cross but the knight errantry of the sentiment for what is Divine?

One cannot say of Don Quixote that his was strictly idealism; he did not fight for ideas. It was spiritualism; he fought for the spirit. Turn this Don Quixote to religious speculation, as he himself dreamed one time when he met some laborers carrying figures in relief and carved work for the reredos of their village church, and to meditation on the eternal verities, and see him ascend to Mount Carmel through the dark night of the soul, to witness from up there, from the very summit, the rising of the sun that never sets, and like the eagle that accompanies St. John at Patmos, to gaze on that sun face to face and scrutinize its spots, leaving the owl that accompanies Athena on Olympus—she of the gray-green eyes, that is, owl-like eyes, that sees in the dark, but is dazzled by daylight—to seek with her eyes among the shadows prey for her young.

And Quixotism, either speculative or mediative, is, like the personal variety, madness also; a madness descended from the madness of the Cross. Therefore it is despised by reason. Philosophy at bottom hates Christianity, and this was well proved by the mild Marcus Aurelius.

#### THE TRAGEDY OF THE CROSS

The tragedy of Christ, the Divine tragedy, is that of the Cross. Pilate, the skeptic, the cultivated man, tried by means of mockery to turn it into a kind of comedy, and he contrived that farce of the king with a reed for a scepter and a crown of thorns, saying: "Behold the Man!" But the people, more humane than he, the people who seek tragedy,

cried: "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" That other tragedy, the tragedy of humanity, is Don Quixote's, his face covered with soap to rouse the laughter of the Duke's servants, and of the Dukes themselves, servants also. "Behold the madman!" they would say. Comic and irrational tragedy is the Passion suffered through mockery and contempt. The highest heroism possible for an individual as well as for a people is to know how to face ridicule: better yet is it to know how to expose self to ridicule and not to be afraid of it.

Religion is, then, a transcendental economics, or, if you please, metaphysics. For a man the universe has, together with its logical, esthetic, and ethical values, also an economic value, likewise universal and normative, in the religious value. We are not concerned only with truth, beauty, and goodness; there is a question also and before all, of salvation of the individual, of perpetuation, which those norms do not secure for us. So-called political economy teaches us the most adequate way, the most economical, of satisfying our necessities, rational or otherwise, beautiful or ugly, moral or immoral—a good business, economically speaking, may be a fraud, or something which in the long run leads to death,—and the supreme necessity of humanity is not to die, to enjoy forever the plenitude of the very limitation of the individual. Indeed, the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist teaches us that the substance of the Body of Jesus Christ is all in the consecrated Host and all in each part of the Host, which means that God is all in all in the universe and all in each of the individuals that constitute it. This is fundamentally not a principle of logic, or of esthetics, or of ethics, but of transcendental economics or religion. By means of this norm can philosophy judge optimism and pessimism: *If the human soul is immortal the world is economically and hedonistically good, but if not, it is bad.* The significance which the categories of good and of evil give to optimism and pessimism is not an ethical significance but one that is economic and hedonistic. That is good which satisfies our vital longing and evil that which does not satisfy it. . . .

The philosophy in the soul of my people seems to me the expression of an intimate tragedy similar to the tragedy in the soul of Don Quixote, like the expression of

a struggle between what the world is as shown by reason and science, and what it is as we desire it to be, told by our faith and religion. This philosophy is the secret of what is often said about us; that we cannot be reduced to European culture, meaning we will not resign ourselves to it. No; Don Quixote will not resign himself to either the world or its truth, to science or logic, to art or esthetics, to morals or ethics.

"The fact is," people have often told me, "that with all this the only thing you will accomplish will be to drive the world to the most insane Catholicism." I have been accused of being a reactionary and even of being a Jesuit. Even so, what of it?

#### FIGHTING FOR IDEALS

Yes, I know that it is madness to try to turn back the river's waters to their source, and that only the common people look for the cure of their ills in the past; but I also know that everybody who fights for an ideal, even though it appear from the past, pushes the world along toward the future, and that the only reactionaries are those who are content with the present. Every suppressed restoration of the past is a progress toward the future, and if that past is a dream, something badly known .....so much the better. As always, we are going on to the future; whoever keeps going toward it, even if he goes backwards. Who knows if that is not best after all?

I feel that I have a medieval soul, and it appears to me that the soul of my country is also medieval; that this soul has made its way through the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Revolution, learning indeed from them, but without being touched to the soul, preserving still the spiritual inheritance of those times. Quixotism is but the most desperate part of the fight of the Middle Ages against the Renaissance.

Don Quixote made himself ridiculous, but did he perhaps know the most tragic ridicule, the reflex ridicule, when a man makes himself ridiculous to himself, before the eyes of his own soul? . . . And what did Don Quixote leave behind him? one may ask. I reply that he left himself, and that a man, a man living and immortal,

is worth all theories and all philosophies. Other countries have left us institutions, books; we have left soul. St. Teresa is worth any institution whatever, and any "Critique of Pure Reason" at all.

Of course, Don Quixote was converted,—to die, poor man. But that other, the real one, the one that remained and lives among us animating us with his breath, was not converted; he still animates us when we make ourselves ridiculous, and he ought not to die. The Don Quixote who was converted in order to die, may have been converted because he was mad and it was his madness, and not his death or his conversion, that made him immortal, earning him a pardon for the fault of having been born. *Felix culpa!* Nor was he cured, for he simply changed his madness. His death was his final adventure in chivalry, with it he stormed Heaven, which yields to violence.

Don Quixote died and descended into hell, and he entered there with his lance in its socket, and freed all the condemned as if they had been galley-slaves, closing the gates and taking away from above them the label which Dante saw there, and putting one in its place that said: Hope forever! Escorted by those whom he had liberated, who were making fun of him, he rode up to heaven. And God laughed in fatherly fashion at him, a Divine laughter that filled his soul with immortal happiness.

#### NEVER DESPAIR

One Don Quixote, however, stayed here, among us, fighting desperately. Does his fight not get away from desperation? Why is it that among the words that the English language has taken from our tongue we find together with *siesta*, *camarilla*, *guerrilla*, and others, the word *desperado* (a desperate man)? That Quixote within us of which I spoke, conscious of his own tragic comedy, is he not a desperado? Yes, a desperado like Pizarro and like Loyola. But "desperation overcomes the impossible," and it is from desperation alone that hope heroic, hope absurd, and hope insane have sprung. *Spero quia absurdum*, we should say, rather than *credo*.

Why did Don Quixote fight? For Dulcinea, for glory, for life, for life after death. Not for Iseult, who is the eternal flesh; not for Beatrice, who is theology; not for Marguerite, who is the people; not for Helen, who is

civilization. He fought for Dulcinea, and won her, since he lives. The greatest thing about him was to have been made fun of and to have won after all, because he won by being made fun of; he overcame the world by letting it laugh at him. . . .

Don Quixote hears his own laughter, he hears the Divine laughter also, and since he is not a pessimist, since he believes in life eternal, he must fight, assailing the modern inquisitorial scientific orthodoxy in order to bring into being a new and impossible Middle Ages, one which is dualistic, contradictory, and passionate. Like a new Savonarola, that Italian Quixote at the end of the fifteenth century, he fights against this modern age which was begun by Machiavelli and which will end in comedy. He fights against the rationalism inherited from the eighteenth century. Peace of conscience, conciliation between faith and reason, will not, thanks to God's Providence, be enough. The world must be as Don Quixote wills and the inns must be castles, and he will fight with it and to all appearances be conquered by it, but he will prevail by being made fun of.

"Reason speaks and thought bites," said Petrarch, but reason also bites, and it bites in the center of the heart. And we have no greater heat with our greater light. "Light, light, still more light!" they report that the dying Goethe exclaimed. No; heat, heat, still more heat; is what we need, because we are dying of coldness and not of darkness. It is not night that kills, it is the freezing cold and ice.

Romanticism! Perhaps that word comes near what I mean, and it helps us all the more by its very lack of precision. Against this romanticism there has recently been unchained, particularly in France, the pedantry of rationalism and classicism. Do you assert that romanticism is another kind of pedantry, a sentimental pedantry? Perhaps it is. In this world the cultivated man is either a dilettante or a pedant; make your choice. Probably these were pedants: René, Adolfo, Obermann, and Lara. . . . A case of seeking consolation among the disconsolate. . . .

Bruno believed in the triumph of his doctrines: at least they say so on the foot of the statue erected to him in the Campo dei Fiori, facing the Vatican, where it is written that this honor is done him in "the age foreseen by him."

But our Don Quixote, the new-born, the man within, he who is aware of his own comic character, does not believe that his ideas will prevail in this world because they are not of it. It is better that they should not triumph. If they desire to make a king of Don Quixote, he will retire alone to the hills, fleeing from crowds both of those who seek to make a king and those who seek to slay a king. just as Christ betook Himself in solitude to the hills, when they wanted to proclaim Him king after the miracle of the loaves and the fishes. He left the title of king as a superscription for the Cross.

What, then, is the new mission of Don Quixote today in this world? To cry aloud, to cry aloud in the wilderness. But the wilderness hears even though men do not, and some day it will become a resounding forest, and the solitary voice which falls like a seed in the desert will become a gigantic cedar which, with its hundred thousand tongues, will sing an eternal Hosanna to the Lord of life and of death.

---

### The Christian Mind

THE title itself of "The Christian Mind," Dom Anscar Vonier's recent book [writes Father Hull in the *Bombay Examiner*] is suggestive. A man may be a Christian by profession, or a pagan by profession, or anything else by profession; and in all obvious points, if asked about his faith or religion, he will answer correctly "by the book," as the saying is. But all this is according to the *letter*. As soon as we go below the surface and look at that man's interior springs of thought, sentiment and action, we may find a deep inconsistency between these and the external profession.

To take perhaps the clearest instance: The Gospel draws a sharp antithesis between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of this world; and God and the world or Christ and the world, are held up to us as two diametrically opposite entities, the one warring against the other for the victory. Now you can have people who, as regards their external and professed position, are Christians, but whose whole interior life is so permeated with worldliness that little of the Christian spirit subsists therein. Their point of view is that of the world, which

has for its horizon the limits of this life, and the good things of this life, and the ambitions and aspirations of this life, practically as if no other life existed—the only qualification being to draw the line at clear and flagrant breaches of the Commandments, so as to keep the reckoning sufficiently straight for the next world to escape the imminent peril of damnation. Worldliness in this sense is not the same thing as wickedness. It is in fact quite compatible with practical freedom from wickedness. It must rather be defined as a general outlook on life and its problems, which takes for its standpoint the material and natural interests of the present life such as wealth, prosperity, success, reputation, as the object aimed at—not *merely* aimed at (which is quite legitimate in the best Christian) but aimed at as if they were the *one great good*, the *be-all and end-all* of life; ignoring the fact that man's last end and final destiny lie in another sphere for which the present life is a preparation, and that a man should view this life in that way, and make friends of this world only as a means to a higher end, and not as an end in itself.

This other-world attitude need not in the least make a man peculiar, or put him out of touch with his worldly surroundings. I can suppose a case in which two men are both acting alike; both filling their place in business and in society in the same way; both highly respected and worthy of respect; both leading upright and proper lives and giving no handle to blame or criticism; both thoroughly enjoying life, moreover, and making as much of it as possible with the due restraint and moderation of a wise and prudent man. And yet their whole outlook upon life may be totally different. The one may be an agnostic or negationist in religion. He may have been a Christian by tradition and bringing up, but has lost practical touch with religion in any form, and become completely indifferent. The other may be not only a professed but a practical Christian. He need not be a pietist or devotee, although, curiously enough, you can have Christians who are remarkable for their piety and devotion but are thoroughly worldly in their outlook on life. But the difference between the two which I am supposing is this. The first individual looks upon his life as the *be-all and end-all* of everything, while the

second individual is habitually conscious that everything in this world is a preparation for a future life, and his estimate of things is based on this consciousness.

I am assuming a case which perhaps is never perfectly realized in life. But I am assuming it so as bring out clearly the difference between the present-world mind and the future-world mind. Now let us add the Christian element; namely not merely a theistic belief in God, but a belief in Christ as the great intermediary and interpreter between God and man. Then you will understand what is meant by the "Christian mind," as distinguished from any other kind of mind—whether you call it the worldly mind, or the pagan mind, or anything else.

The author before us analyzes the Christian mind, the function of which can be described in Ignatian phrase as the habit of "thinking with the Church." He takes the different elements of the Christian creed and code, showing how the Christian mind will think of God, of Christ, of regeneration, of the conduct of life, the meeting with death, and so on. The reader may take the book as a sort of mirror. If while reading he finds himself reflected therein he may congratulate himself. If not, he will realize that there is something to be changed in his habits of thinking and viewing things, and will realize the necessity of the change. On the whole, the writer confines himself to the doctrinal side of the Christian mentality, and we feel that a supplementary volume would be welcome, dwelling more on the ethical side, on the lines of the foregoing rumination.

### **What Really Happened July 4, 1776**

Trumbull's painting "The Declaration of Independence," in the rotunda of the Capitol, supplies the idea of the event that the Fourth of July is thought to commemorate. Standing in a picturesque group the fifty-six Fathers of the Republic are supposed to have then affixed their autographs to the immortal Declaration. This, however, is fiction and to people who read their history as they do their daily papers' headlines only, with guesses at the rest, it is a shock to learn that the Declaration of Independence was not signed on July 4, 1776, at all, nor in fact until some weeks later. The sequence of events was in

this order. On June 7 Richard Henry Lee introduced a resolution in the Continental Congress declaring: "That these united colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States." This was debated and adopted on July 2, by the vote of twelve colonies. That evening John Adams wrote to his wife Abigail:

The second Day of July, 1776, will be the most memorable Epoca in the History of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding Generations as the great anniversary Festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance by solemn Acts of Devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with Pomp, Parade, with Shews, Games, Sports, Bells, Bonfires, Illuminations from one end of this Continent to the other, from this time forward forever more.

Thomas Jefferson then began to write the Declaration, which was the official explanation "to a candid world," why the resolution of July 2 had been adopted. He had the document ready on July 4 and Congress was quick to accept the draft. John Hancock as President of the Congress, attested it, it was ordered printed, and the next day copies were distributed throughout the colonies. There are no authentic records of any bellingring, or rejoicings for the document was not imparted to the general public until July 8 when Colonel John Nixon read it from a platform that had been erected to observe the transit of Venus. "Few respectable people were present," records Deborah Logan, who from her adjoining garden saw the audience that listened to Nixon.

On July 19, Congress ordered that the Declaration adopted on July 4, should be engrossed on parchment and signed by all the members. On August 2 fifty-three or four signed the document, the others signing it later. In this regard it may be remarked that a popular Catholic tradition is upset by the fact that Charles Carroll was not present in Congress at all on July 4, 1776; in fact he did not join that body until July 18. Neither was his signature "of Carrollton" an incident of the signing of our great charter. The "Last of the Signers" had used this designation for ten years before; from the time he returned to his native land from college at St. Omer, when his father gave him the Carrollton manor. Writing in 1765 to his friend Edmund Jennings he signed himself "Charles Carroll of Carrollton" adding "by which appellation, if you favor me with an answer, direct to me your letter."